

Message Text

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TAGS: EAGR FAO

SUBJ: STATEMENT TO PRESS BY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, FAO, DR. BOERMA

SUMMARY:. DR. BOERMA, DIRECTOR GENERAL, FAO, IN PRESS STATEMENT JAN. 30 IN ACCRA SAID SITUATION IN SAHELIAN COUNTRIES WORSE THAN LAST YEAR AND REPEATED HIS APPEAL FOR 500,000 TONS FOOD AND \$30 MILLION TO ALLEVIATE THE CONTINUING EMERGENCY. HE NOTED DONORS HAVE COMMITTED 500,000 TONS GRAIN; PROBLEM OF SHIPPING AND INTERNAL TRANSPORT; MEETING WITH DONORS IN BRUSSELS FEB. 12. HE STRESSED SERIOUS PROBLEM OF SLOW RESPONSE IN PROVIDING \$30 MILLION FOR SEED, TRANSPORT, HEALTH, RECOVERY PROGRAMS. NO REFERENCE TO U.S. CONTRIBUTIONS IN STATEMENT BUT BOERMA IN CONVERSATION WITH USAID DIRECTOR PRAISING OF U.S. CONTRIBUTION AND SAID HE HAD POINTED THIS OUT IN QUESTION PERIOD WITH REPORTERS. NO REFERENCE TO U.S. ROLE MENTIONED IN GHANA PRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. DR. BOERMA, DIRECTOR GENERAL FAO IS VISITING SEVERAL WEST
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AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO REVIEW SAHELIAN RELIEF PROGRAM HIS VISIT

TO GHANA WAS TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OF FAO/WFP/UNDP REPRESENTATIVES FROM SAHELIAN ZONE COUNTRIES. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF HIS STATEMENT TO PRESS ON JAN. 30, 1974:

A. "AS SOME OF YOU MAY KNOW, OFFICERS OF FAO, THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM AND THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM -- ALL OF THEM WORKING IN THE SAHELIAN ZONE COUNTRIES -- CONVENED HERE TODAY TO GIVE ME A FIRST-HAND ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS IN THAT TRAGICALLY DROUGHT-PLAGUED REGION. I CAN TELL YOU, IN BRIEF, THAT CONDITIONS IN SOME OF THESE SUB-SHARA COUNTRIES ARE EVEN WORSE THAN THEY WERE LAST YEAR. I AM THINKING PARTICULARLY OF NIGER, MALI, CHAD AND MAURITANIA.

B. "THESE COUNTRIES ARE EXPERIENCING THEIR SIXTH STRAIGHT YEAR OF SUB-NORMAL RAINS. WELLS HAVE RUN DRY, WHOLE VILLAGES HAVE BEEN ABANDONED, AND ESTIMATED 3.5 MILLION CATTLE HAVE DIED, MANY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ON THE MOVE, LOOKING FOR FOOD; PARTS OF THE POPULATION ARE SO UNDERNOURISHED THAT THEY ARE WEAK AND VULNERABLE TO DISEASE. ONLY A GREAT EFFORT BY BOTH NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS PREVENTED MASS STARVATION.

C. "UNFORTUNATE THAT EFFORT MUST CONTINUE WITH UNABATED ENERGY. ON NOVEMBER 26 THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND I MADE AN APPEAL FOR 500,000 TONS OF FOOD AND \$30 MILLION TO ALLEVIATE THE CONTINUING EMERGENCY IN THE SAHELIAN ZONE. THE APPEAL WAS BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF A MULTI-DONOR MISSION THAT TOURED THE AREA IN OCTOBER. THE RESPONSE TO THAT APPEAL HAS BEEN VERY GOOD IN SOME RESPECTS BUT TOO WEAK IN OTHERS.

D. "FOOD FOR THE HUMAS POPULATION OF COURSE HAD THE FIRST PRIORITY. THE MULTI-DONOR MISSION ESTIMATED THAT A NET FIGURE OF 450,000 TONS OF FOOD GRAINS TOGETHER WITH 60,000 TONS OF PROTECTIVE FOODS SUCH AS MILK POWDER, BUTTER OIL, ETC., WOULD BE NEEDED TO FILL THE GAP BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND NEED. SINCE THE MISSION MADE ITS SURVEY SOME GOVERNMENTS HAVE REVISED UPWARD THE FOOD GRAINS REQUIREMENTS. THE LATE RAINS FAILED AND THE HARVEST WAS WORSE THAN IT WAS ESTIMATED IN OCTOBER.

E. "THE DONOR COUNTRIES HAVE RESPONDED GENEROUSLY. THEY HAVE ALREADY COMMITTED APPROXIMATELY 500,000 TONS OF GRAIN. THAT IS UNCLASSIFIED

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MORE THAN THE AID RECEIVED BY THE SAHELIAN COUNTRIES LAST YEAR, AND WE EXPECT DONATIONS FROM A FEW MORE COUNTRIES. THIS IS TRULY A HEART-WARMING RESPONSE WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT THE PRICE OF FOOD-GRAINS, FOR INSTANCE, HAS INCREASED TREMENDOUSLY SINCE THE COMMITMENTS THAT WERE MADE LAST YEAR. SOME DONATIONS OF PROTECTIVE FOOD HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED AND OTHERS ARE STILL AWAITED. F. "THERE REMAINS, HOWEVER, THE VERY LARGE PROBLEM OF SHIPPING -- IN A WORLD SUDDENLY STRICKEN WITH AN ENERGY CRISIS -- AND THE

PROBLEM OF INTERNAL TRANSPORT. FAO'S OFFICE FOR THE SAHELIAN RELIEF OPERATION HAS PREPARED A SHIPPING PATTERN AIMED AT A SWIFT AND EVEN FLOW OF FOOD SUPPLIES WITH THE PARTICULAR TARGET OF GETTING FOOD TO REMOTE AREAS BEFORE THEY ARE CUT OFF BY RAINS -- HOPED-FOR RAINS, I MIGHT SAY.

G. "WE ARE MEETING WITH DONOR COUNTRIES IN BRUSSELS ON FEB. 12 AND WE SHALL SUGGEST THAT SHIPMENTS BE EXPEDITED AND COORDINATED CLOSELY AND FAO WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE FLOW OF SUPPLIES, AS REQUESTED BY DONOR COUNTRIES.

H. "THIS IS TERRIBLY IMPORTANT, AND PERHAPS LOGISTICS ARE THE GREATEST SINGLE PROBLEM. WE MUST AVOID THE SITUATION OF LAST YEAR WHEN FAO AND MANY INDIVIDUAL DONOR COUNTRIES HAD TO MOUNT AIRLIFT OF FOOD, NEEDS AND ANIMAL FEED THAT COST AT LEAST \$40 MILLION.

I. "NOW I TURN TO SOME OTHER SERIOUS PROBLEMS. IN OUR APPEAL WE ASKED FOR \$30 MILLION FOR SHORT TERM RECOVERY ACTIONS, WHICH, IF NOT TAKEN NOW, WILL LEAVE THE SAHELIAN PEOPLES VULNERABLE TO IMMINENT AS WELL AS FUTURE HARDSHIP AND EVEN DISASTER.

J. "\$3 MILLION OF THAT MONEY WAS EARMARKED FOR SEEDS. IN SOME AREAS ENTIRE CROPS WERE WIPED OUT BY DROUGHT. THE FARMERS, IF THEY ARE STILL THERE, CANNOT PLANT NEW CROPS WITHOUT SEEDS. IF THEY HAVE MOVED OUT, NO ONE WILL PERSUADE THEM TO GO BACK UNLESS THEY HAVE SEEDS TO PLANT.

K. "\$4 MILLION IS FOR ACQUISITION AND OPERATION OF TRUCKS. FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES ARE OF NO VALUE UNLESS THE GOVERNMENTS CAN GET THEM TO THEIR PEOPLE.

L. "\$5 MILLION WAS FOR THE WHO FOR DRUGS, PREVENTION OF DISEASE AND OTHER HEALTH MEASURES. THIS MORNING THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM OFFICER OF NIGER TOLD US THAT THE PEOPLE, WEAKENED BY HUNGER, ARE MUCH WORSE OFF THAN A YEAR AGO. MANY MORE ARE TURNING UP AT HOSPITALS AND CLINICS. DOCTORS SAY THEY ARE FAR WEAKER THAN LAST YEAR, THE CLINICS LACK BASIC MEDICINES AND THE MEDICAL SERVICES HAVE A SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF VEHICLES.

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M. "OTHER FUNDS ARE NEEDED FOR UNICEF PROGRAMS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND NURSING AND PREGNANT MOTHERS, FOR ANIMAL HEALTH AND FEED AND FOR STORAGE.

N. "THESE ARE MEASURES DESIGNED TO HELP THESE HARD-HIT BUT COURAGEOUS PEOPLES TO GET BACK ON THEIR FEET. THEY ARE MEASURES TO PREVENT A CONSTANT REPETITION OF RELIEF HANDOUTS -- WHICH NO ONE WANTS.

O. "SO FAR, THE RESPONSE IN THIS AREA HAS BEEN SLOW. UNDERSTANDABLY, MANY COUNTRIES ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN PROBLEMS. BUT IT IS TO THE INTEREST OF ALL TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE SAHELIAN ZONE WITH MORE THAN EXPENSIVE AND REPEATED FOOD SHIPMENTS.

P. "PERHAPS YOU GOOD PEOPLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA CAN BRING THIS PROBLEM HOME. WE VERY MUCH NEED THE GOODWILL OF YOUR READERS AND THEIR GOVERNMENTS, WHEREVER THEY BE."

2. COMMENT: DR. BOERMA EXPRESSED TO USAID DIRECTOR APPRECIATION AND PRAISE FOR U.S. CONTRIBUTION AND SAID HE HAD POINTED THIS OUT TO REPORTERS DURING QUESTION PERIOD. SUBSEQUENT INQUIRIES OF PRESS INDICATED CONSIDERABLE PRESS INTEREST IN U.S. CONTRIBUTION. NO REFERENCE TO U.S. PARTICIPATION IN MORNING PAPERS. BOERMA CALLED ON CHAIRMAN, NRC AND COMMISSIONER AGRICULTURE. COMMISSIONER BERNASKO APPEALED TO FAO TO "PUMP MORE MONEY IN AGRICULTURE IN COUNTRIES BORDERING DROUGHT-STRICKEN SAHELIAN ZONE COUNTRIES....SO THAT DROUGHT-STRICKEN COUNTRIES COULD BE SUPPLIED WITH FOOD PRODUCED ON THE CONTINENT AT CHEAPER PRICES INSTEAD OF IMPORTING FOOD FROM OUTSIDE."
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